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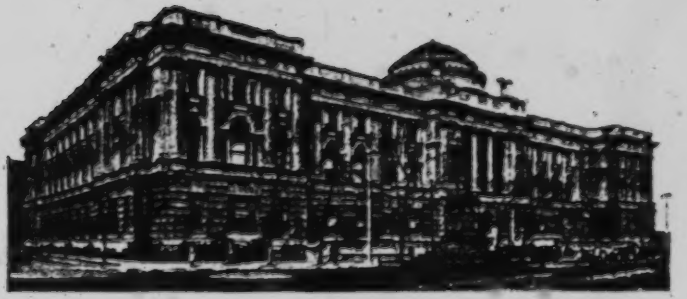

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AMONG THE WINNEBAGO

By Huron H. Smith*

During the summer of 1928, the writer made a study of the Winnebago Indians, in line with his former ethnobotanical studies of other Indians of Wisconsin. After having worked with four tribes who were all of Algonkian stock, it was interesting to encounter these people who are related to the Sioux. The four tribes previously studied were the Menomini, Meskwaki, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi. The first two are the subjects of Nos. 1 and 2 of Volume IV of the bulletin of this museum, while the publications on the latter two are in preparation.

While all of the Algonkian languages are different from one another, they are at least similar enough to enable the student to grasp the likeness in a short time. In fact, Potawatomi is quite similar to Ojibwe, a sort of an abbreviated Ojibwe, as it were. Some of the medicinal words evidently point to a common origin, for exactly the same name is sometimes used for a plant by all four tribes. A careful study of Indian plant names reveals those unnamed plants that came into their region within historic times, as non-native or adventive species. The use of plants is a vital topic among Indians, and their plant lore is handed down from generation to generation. Most of our Wisconsin adventive plants have come into the State in the last hundred years, and a goodly proportion of these in the last forty years. Indians are not apt to take the white man's word for the medicinal use of the adventive plant, so that their lack of an Indian name for the plant in question, is sure evidence that it is a new comer. When we consider how long it must have taken these people to acquire their medicinal knowledge, doubtless by the old process of "trial and error," we wonder how many more centuries must elapse before they learn the uses of adventive species.

The Winnebago are particularly zealous in giving everything Winnebago names, if possible, and should there be some conspicuous attribute to an adventive plant, it will probably have a name in their language. Questioning will bring out the reason for the name and also whether or not they know a use for the plant. They have regular words for tea

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and coffee, which were, of course, unknown to them before the coming of the White Man. Other tribes in Wisconsin have made no attempt to set up their own words for these, but call them by their English names as nearly as they can pronounce them. This trait of the Winnebago is often amusing. For example the watermelon was unknown to them until about seventy-five years ago. The first recipient of a watermelon among them considered it a pumpkin, cut it up into small pieces, and boiled it in a pot. The resultant product was scarcely edible, so led to the appellation of "wicawasukela"—"a pumpkin that did'nt get ripe." But later, they discovered that the whites ate them just as they were; and upon trying this they discovered their merit, and have been very fond of them ever since. But the first name stuck, and it is thus called to this day.

While we had met Winnebago before this summer, we had never attempted to discourse at length on their uses of plants. In 1923, we first met Frank Smith, "makiwika," with his wife who was making baskets, in Minocqua where we admired her art. Every year since we have seen Frank at some Indian pow-wow or other. During the "Pageant of Progress," in Milwaukee, July, 1926, Frank and his new Ojibwe wife were at the Indian Village on the lake front, with Mr. H. L. Mumm, of Wausau, demonstrating Indian arts and crafts. There, too, we met two other Winnebago workers, Jim Henniger and his wife, although the Indians in the village proper were all full-blooded Ojibwe from Lac Court Oreilles, Wisconsin. The museum is also fortunate in having the friendship of Ulysses A. White, of Wisconsin Rapids, who was formerly employed in Milwaukee. Mr. White is a pure blooded Winnebago, as is his wife, a quite uncommon occurrence in these times of inter-tribal marriages. He introduced to the Museum, John Bear, of Wisconsin Rapids, another old Winnebago Indian, through whom Mr. W. C. McKern, Associate Curator of Anthropology, of the Museum, has been able to collect some interesting ancient Winnebago stories. Mr. Bear spent the entire winter of 1927-1928 at the Museum, and was helped in his work by Mr. White. All of this preliminary work was the subject of several conferences between the writer and Mr. McKern at which we became acquainted with the linguistics of the Winnebago and listed the plant names used in the various stories.

The first trip of the summer was to Trempealeau, where the Museum was conducting archeological investigations which the writer, as President of the Wisconsin Archeological Society, wished to see. Furthermore Mr. McKern had written that there were Winnebago Indians in Trempealeau. These proved to be a family living in the old brewery at the edge of the village, but they were from Winnebago, Nebraska, and were not familiar with the Wisconsin plants. The field party, however, interested us for a week. The Museum camp was established in Perrot State Park, on the banks of the Trempealeau River near its

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junction with the Mississippi. Dr. Evan D. Pierce, of Trempealeau, who was in charge of the park, was much interested in the native flora as well as in archeology, and we made a collection of ninety species then in bloom. Mr. Towne L. Miller, of Fairwater, Wisconsin, Honorary Curator of Archeology of the Museum collected the plants of the region throughout the season, for the Department of Botany.

The Winnebago Indians are found today scattered over the central part of Wisconsin, principally in Marquette, Waushara, Portage, Sauk, Juneau, Adams, Marathon, Wood, Clark, Jackson, and Monroe counties. Wood County with permanent settlements in Arpin, Vesper, Pittsville, Walker, Elm Lake, Dexterville, and Babcock, contains the largest number, about 750. Along the Hemlock River, not far from Pittsville, are found other large settlements of farming Winnebago. In other counties good-sized settlements are located at Neillsville, Wittenberg, Wyeville, Black River Falls, Hatfield, and Tomah. Their Indian agency and school are located at the last mentioned city.

Our chief location during the summer was at A. White's farm, on the Walker Road, six and a half miles south of Wisconsin Rapids. When we arrived, Mr. White was at Kilbourn where many of the Winnebago camp during the tourist season, making baskets and bead work, and taking part in dances and entertainments. Jim Henniger and his wife, our pageant friends, were there, caring for her father, Dave Dekorah, a prominent man in the medicine lodge, who was sick. He afterwards died and was buried in their community graveyard, with Indian ceremony. The Whites made us welcome and we pitched our tent in a grove of white pines not far from their spring. There were several other Winnebago Indians near at hand, including Henry Dick, from Briggsville. Henry is important in the medicine society and immediately made friends with us and started to teach us the Winnebago language. He was especially bitter against the peyote cult, which many Winnebago have embraced, declaring that peyote was worse than whiskey, because a man drunk on whiskey, would be sober the next morning and able to go to work, whereas with peyote, he became "crazy", and would not work for four or five days while under its influence. He further said that the peyote cult worshippers never possess anything, but live on their industrious neighbors who belong to the medicine lodge. These medicine lodge Indians raise potatoes, corn, beans, carrots, hay, grain, hogs and chickens, according to Henry, and would not let their own people starve, but did not like the shiftlessness of the peyote worshippers. He wished he could see the President of the United States to tell him not to let any Indian have peyote. He thinks bad days are coming to the peyote-eating Indians. A few years ago, this cactus drug, most of which comes from Texas, sold for $4.00 a thousand buttons, but the current prices in 1928 were $25 per thousand of number one size; $30.00 per thousand for number two size; and

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$35 per thousand for number three size. The "buttons" are really branches of the Peyote Cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*), a small compact cactus growing from southern Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico down into old Mexico. The peyote religion was introduced to the Indians of the United States by peyote cults, among the Indians of Mexico. The Government strictly forbids possession of or traffic in these buttons, but the number of converts to the cult is on the increase.

On the other hand, the peyote Indians among the Winnebago have little regard for the medicine lodge Indians. They consider them benighted, old-fashioned and unwise. When an Indian joins peyote, according to them, he sees the error of his ways and the sacred, ceremonial objects of his past become of no value to him. In such cases, the field collector of some museum finds it easy to acquire excellent specimens of sacred objects. While still in use, an Indian would not part with his medicine bundle for money, but once it has been superseded by a change in faith, he becomes glad to realize almost anything for it. Such a bundle is valued by anthropologists according to the sacred objects it contains.

The peyote people that we met near Wisconsin Rapids did not bear out the poor name given them by the old pagans. They were industrious and proud of their religion. The peyote cult, there, shows considerable Christian missionary influence, in their acceptance of Jesus Christ as their deity. The medicine lodge people have never been interested in the translation of the Lord's Prayer but the Winnebago peyote followers use it as a chanted peyote song. It is called *Hilukanala gikaraj hanila*, (Lord prayer his). It follows thus:

Hianjinwila wagregi shanagre, lash hashinila wakajak nigigidek•jena.

"Our Father in heaven who dwells your name holy (let us) keep it.
Hunkma hashini'a hilaijik•jawina. Woshga hashinila manegi
Kingdom your come down (on earth). Doing yours on earth
uinek•jena wagregi jaske hinaki sheske manegi hilek•jena. Hampdee
should in heaven like doing same on earth should be. This day
waiskapduc haniwila hunkuwianjc. Egi wazawoishana waniwila
bread daily ours give us. And then sins ours
waigitunawila wazahigishana waniwila waigitunawila sheke. Egi inke
forgive us sins yours and yours forgive us same. And then don't
wazawoishana wahicja hinutiwinine Ezi wowak•jega egi hingijilawige
(into) temptations deliver us. Our Lord and help us
kishipuiwine. Hunkmara nchashinigaja Egi homashjala nchashinigaja
get away Kingdom thy and power thy
Egi hoishagra nchashinigaja manegus•la jeskek•jena.
and glory thy forever Amen."

It will be noted that the Winnebago even have a word for "Amen," meaning to some extent "let it be that way," whereas among the Menomini Indians they have not translated it but articulate it as we do — AMEN.

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—Amen. For the sake of those who think all Indians speak alike, we append in a footnote the Lord's Prayer in Menomini.[1]

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The Winnebago have a syllabary which all of them use in writing. It is an arbitrary system and has nothing to do with the ethnologist's way of recording their sounds. It was thus set down by Fred Mallory The first letter always has the sound of a as in arm and the pronunciation of the first line would be ha, he, hi, ho.

A	ae	ai	ao		k	ke	ki	ko	
w	we	wi	wo		a	e	i	o	
m	me	mi	mo		l	le	li	lo	
n	ne	ni	no		t	te	ti	to	(explosive)
l	le	li	lo	(ja)	tt	tte	tti	tto	(cha chay chi cho)
y	ye	yi	yo	(ga)					
r	reke	reki	roko	(ska ske ski sko)					
s	se	si	so						
h	he	hi	ho						
g	ge	gi	go						

Indian syllabaries are interesting but of no ethnological value.

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Fred Mallory's wife was initiated into the medicine lodge when she was thirteen years old, but since both are now peyote followers, they said there is nothing wrong in their telling the writer about their early history. Their story is as follows: In the early days, there were two brothers, Konuga, the eldest, and Henaka. (These names still apply to the order of birth,—the third son is *Hagaga*, and the fourth, *Nahiga*. The same with girls, the first is *Hinuga*, second, *Wihunga*, third, *Hinahega*, fourth, *Hakasiaga*.) The two brothers were at Kilbourn on an island in the Wisconsin River—*Nikusa*. One, Konuga, told the other he saw a spirit in the water and Henaka also saw a spirit, but Konuga saw it first, so it was *his* spirit. It was purple in color and rose from the depths of the water and sank down again. A sort of quarrel developed between them as to whose spirit should be followed, but when Hagaga, the third son entered the argument, they both united against him. Hagaga was as wise as an owl, and knew more than the other

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[1] "*Nocknenan kesekok apon. Nas ta kat kes achpechtanechton*
"Our Father in heaven who dwells. Let it be honored
kiwichiwon. Nas ta kat pimikat kitokemawin. Anonechtamon nas ta
thy name. Let it come thy kingdom. As the Lord wishes it to
kat esekemakat tepa kesekok misik ios achkibe. Mesech
be done like heaven so here (on earth) the same. Give us
iochpe as kesekok nepakisiganemenan uchtanechkin kesegaton. Ponikutatawesch
now as in heaven bread our daily and every day as we live. Forgive us
minis kais nachkchekeaon ais ponikitatawakechtos kais
and those we had angered you, as we forgive those
nachkihiamachtos. Pon minis ishisesech kakit:ipanichtoane.
that trespassed against us. Lead us not into temptation.
Miskonamowesch ta mata. Amen.
Take it away from us. Amen."

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brothers, though they were his elders. The two older brothers made up their minds to do away with Hagaga. They went into the forest together and drew an image of Hagaga on the ground, painting his heart with red earth. They were preparing to thrust a spear into the heart of the image and thus kill Hagaga but he was on the limb of a tree watching them and yelled at them as they were ready to strike—"Hey, what are you about to do?" They looked up, discovered him, and were so scared at their detection that they ran away without stabbing the figure. He followed them to Trempealeau Mountain where the spirits live.

This mountain is supposed by the Winnebago to be hollow and they think all the powers of the medicine lodge reside therein. In the center of this mountain, the medicine lodge is supposed to be laid out, with the cardinal points of the compass indicated by poles. The poles represent serpents and the tie pieces are serpents, because to the Winnebago medicine lodge members the serpent is sacred."

The various animal deities came into the center of the lodge. They were, in order of entrance, the otter, the loon, the crane, the turtle, the fox, and a number of others. Nowadays when the medicine lodge ceremony is in progress, the Indians make song imitations of these various animal spirits coming into the lodge. In the main, they agree with the conception of creation held by the Menomini." The writer related the Menomini story to Henry Dick, who said it was almost the same as the Winnebago. Their initiation ceremony starts at an earlier age which coincides with the age of puberty for both boys and girls and their medicine lodge ceremony requires more time than that of the Menomini; —four days for the lodge ceremony and two days for the testing of the initiate. While the ceremony is in progress, the candidate must not go to sleep. If he does, one of the members will shake him. The first two days and nights, the ceremony is mostly chanting and explanations, while the final two days and nights are given over to active floor work. The candidate must learn to do exactly as he is told and to obey instantly. The members, during the ceremony, tweak his ears and do various things to him in imitation of the animal deities. He is then shot with medicine bags to demonstrate their power. That is, the otter skin bag is grasped by the head between the fingers of the left hand of the medicine lodge member, and touched to his own lips; then having given it his power as a medicine man, he extends it toward the initiate, crying "Hui hui" and the initiate must drop his head immediately and fall over or backward. He is shot four times in the course of the ceremony.

On the fifth and sixth days, two or three of the older members take

"Fred Mallory's children killed a large puffing adder a day or two previous to the relating of this story and the local Winnebago did not like it, prophesying all sorts of dire disasters that would visit them.

"See Milw. Publ. Mus. Bull., Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 14, note 3.

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the candidate into the woods, where none will see them and put him through tests, such as falling immediately when he is shot with a medicine bag. They also teach him to sing the ritual of the medicine lodge, being sure that no one hears.

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The Winnebago observe the same precautions in gathering plants and place as great stress upon the manner of this gathering as do other Wisconsin Indians.

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Most of the summer was spent among the Winnebago collecting their various economic and medicinal plants, about which copious notes were taken. On August 16, a trip was made to a Winnebago religious

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feast given by A. White and his son, Frank, with two other relatives, at which the writer was given a Winnebago name. As is the Indian custom, no more than one Indian name can be given and a name in a second language must mean the same as the original one. It happens that the first name given the writer was by the Menomini at Keshena; namely *"Onatwonik"* meaning "Flying Squirrel." Hence the Ojibwe followed suit with *"Shagashkandawe"* also meaning "Flying Squirrel," and the Winnebago took their word *"Kashingro"* meaning the same.